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THE MISSION OF A STATE UNIVERSITY

Connected as I am with an institution privately endowed and privately controlled, I might feel some embarrassment in discussing this subject, were it not for the fact, for which I have always been grateful, that the first years of my professional life were passed in a state university. It was my privilege to see what is now one of the leading state institutions of the West pass from a condition of uncertain equilibrium to one of unquestioned stability, from a day of small things to a day of assured strength and large resources. Under the leadership of that state university, and largely through its persistent and well-directed efforts, I saw the public school system reorganized, extended, and made more efficient; the standards of professional training in law and medicine elevated; the investigation and development of the natural resources of the state guided by the advice of the scientific departments; the public spirit and good citizenship of the commonwealth strengthened and informed; and all at the expense of the state, an expense willingly incurred and generously increased. Of course, we never got everything we wanted; we kept in active training our sovereign right as American citizens to criticise the legislature and tell the Governor what he ought to recommend; but we never failed to receive from the lawmakers of the state more liberal support each year than had been accorded the year before. What was drilled into us in those years was an appreciation of the state university as a great agency for serving the common good; a feeling of obligation to give back to the state an equivalent in service for the facilities which it generously gave us; and a determination to put the state, so far as education could do it, in the front rank among American commonwealths.

Fortunately, the day has long since gone by in which it was necessary to argue for the right of a state to furnish, at public expense, higher education of every sort to its sons and daughters. There never has been any legal question on that point; the only controversy has been, at best, one of expediency, and that has long since been affirmatively settled. The existence

of a state university is in itself sufficient proof that, in the state in which it is established, its citizens are committed to the maintenance of higher education at the cost, and for the benefit, of the whole people. If further proof of the general proposition were needed, the fact that more than three-fourths of the states have state universities actively at work would be conclusive. Even in New England, preëminently the home of the privately endowed college and professional school, we have two state universities, and a notable discussion is going on over the propriety of establishing others.

But why are we doing this? Why are the states taxing themselves to provide, either at a nominal cost or entirely free of charge to students, libraries, laboratories, museums, lecture halls, gymnasiums, and all the diversified and expensive apparatus of a modern university? Is it not because we realize, more fully than ever before, the necessity of elevating, physically, intellectually, and morally, and to the highest practicable point, the whole people of a state, if the industrial, political, and social life of the state is to be kept vigorous and pure? We are wrestling to-day in this country with the greatest political problem to which a civilized people has ever addressed itself: the problem of maintaining popular representative government, founded on the consent of the governed, over vast areas, and among peoples drawn from every nation under heaven and representing every degree of social development. We stand committed, we always have stood committed, to government of the people, by the people, for the people; we stand unalterably opposed, as we always have, to the control of government by any one class of men or by any man. Of all the social ideals ever held before the imagination of a nation, this is the most splendid, the most stimulating, the most awe-inspiring: this conception of a whole people standing shoulder to shoulder, each for the other and each for all, controlling their destiny by their votes, impelled by their own intelligence to ever higher and higher achievements of power and reward. It was for the attainment of this ideal, for themselves and their children, that our fathers lived and worked, as it was in the pursuit of it that some of them even dared to die.

Yet I but state an ancient and obvious truth when I assert that the only sure foundation of the greatness of a state is education. I use the word in no restricted sense. I mean by it everything that enters into the making of an efficient and resourceful man or woman. And how immeasurably wide has that field become as the years have sped! How many things that were luxuries once are necessities now! How much that was optional with the fathers is obligatory with the sons! The college which, fifty years ago, gave its bachelor's degree for a course of study less exacting than that of a first-rate modern high school, now demands the high school course as a prerequisite for admission. The practice of law, open less than fifty years ago to anyone who could pass a formal examination on Blackstone's "Commentaries" and the statutes of the state, is rapidly being closed to all who have not behind them a two or three years' course of systematic study, preferably in a law school. We assume that our physician to-day is a graduate of a reputable medical school, and that our minister has had at least a collegiate and a theological training. Our great engineering undertakings are intrusted, not to youths fresh from the common school, but to the graduates of scientific schools of rigorous standards. Everywhere, in all departments of life, we demand the specialist, the highly trained investigator, the skilled technician, the man of assured knowledge and demonstrated power. There is nothing for which we willingly pay so much as for the services of the man or woman who can do for us, in every truth, the thing we are in earnest about having done.

Nor are these lines of highly paid expert service by any means the only ones in which we need ample provision for broad and efficient training. We need it equally in the great domains of agriculture and manufacturing. With all the wealth taken from the land year by year, we have nevertheless hardly begun to appreciate the agricultural possibilities of this country. We do not grow anywhere near as many bushels of wheat or corn, or pounds of cotton, or tons of hay to the acre as we might if our farmers as a class observed more intelligent methods; nor do we get as much for what is raised as we might if farmers

generally applied to their business the same intelligent study of markets and trade conditions that merchants, bankers, and manufacturers apply to theirs. I hear complaint in the North of late over the high price of cotton; but as I look at it, the planter who holds back his crop until he gets the best price that a going market will pay, and thus compels the middleman and the manufacturer to share with him more equitably in the profits of one of the world's great industries, helps to raise the standard of efficiency and intelligence in the whole farmer class.

So with mechanical industry of every sort, and with trade. In spite of all the marvelous growth of machinery and labor-saving appliances, it still remains true that the best workman in any occupation is the one who is best informed, that the best foreman or superintendent is the man of most experience, intelligence, and all-round education, and that a low-grade man and a high-grade machine do not permanently go well together. People sometimes talk as though there were some great fundamental difference between hand work and head work; whereas they are both alike the application of intelligence to the performance of a given task. The carpenter and bricklayer, the brakeman and telegrapher, the printer and electrician, have need, if they are worth their salt, of as much education for the performance of their several tasks, proportionately to the conditions to be overcome, as have the physician, the lawyer, the teacher, or the engineer. And the American state generously builds up its university that it may freely and impartially train them all.

I have emphasized higher education as an advantage, a benefit alike to the community and to the individual. Let me point out also its indispensable service as a safeguard. There can be no greater peril in a republic than an ignorant electorate. From it spring not only disorder and crime, but selfishness, dishonesty, grievous and irrational class distinctions, poverty, and a low state of public morals. And there is another kind of ignorance, distinguished by easy contentment with a small measure of knowledge, a lack of interest in what is going on in the world, and a placid acceptance of cheap ideals and vulgar surroundings, which is as dangerous as illiteracy. If

the American Republic is to endure, as we hope and pray that it may, it can only be through raising each individual in it to as high a plane of culture as his natural powers will admit; enlarging his information, training his faculties and senses, widening the range of his intellectual interests, cultivating his powers of expression, and making him efficient as a worker and a citizen. Between educating the masses and keeping them slaves, there is no middle ground; and we in this country have not yet learned to bow the neck. There are but two classes of people in the world, those who are fit to govern, and those who are fit to be governed.

Nor can we stop with the provision of elementary education in primary and grammar school: we must go on to provide for the higher life and the greater efficiency also: and the same argument that sustains an education of the public for a little way, sustains also their education to the highest degree of which any of them may be capable. It is indeed a heavy burden of responsibility that democracy lays upon us, this development to the fullest extent of the whole mass of people; but two score American commonwealths are going deeper into their pockets every year, and doing it gladly, that they may not learn by bitter experience the social dangers of ignorance. Thomas Jefferson challenged the fundamental political philosophy of his Federalist opponents by declaring that government must, sooner or later, trust the people; and the University of Virginia stands as a lasting monument to the great Southern leader who saw that only through education could the people become fit to be trusted.

I am aware that there are those who feel that the spread of so-called higher education, especially among the middle and lower classes, often carries with it distinct social danger, and who would even have the work of the common schools limited and restrained. In their view, education, whenever it passes beyond the mere elemental necessities of breadwinning, tends to make the lower average of men think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Too much education, we are frankly told, endangers the labor supply, makes workmen discontented with their lot, interferes with the right of the em-

ployer to control his own business, and breeds the social restlessness which is so great an enemy of industrial stability.

Needless to say, I do not share this opinion. Education, of course, is no cure-all for social ills, but neither is it the cause of them. We shall never see in this world equality of individual ability or of social conditions; we would not have it even if it were in our power to bring it about. There will always be hewers of wood and drawers of water, always laborers to be hired, just as there will always be great captains of industry, strong men able to wield the forces of the industrial world and make them tell for social progress. Education will not destroy these distinctions; they are not invidious distinctions, and they ought not to be destroyed. What education will do, what every state in this Union is to-day earnestly purposing that it shall do, is to give to every man, woman, and child something like equality of opportunity, a fair chance to develop all the powers God has given him, a fair chance to add to the wealth and happiness of the community more than he could ever hope to add were he left ignorant and untrained.

If I were a manufacturer, I should wish to sell just as much product as I could. The only way to sell more, in the long run, is for the community to raise its standard of living to a point where it wants more and can afford to have more. Education develops first of all our ability to want things, and after that the earning power that enables us to have them; and the wider and deeper you push the educative process, the wider and deeper become your wants. The illustration may be thought paradoxical, but I venture to assert that if a railroad or a mill corporation were to endow a chair of mathematics or history or modern languages in any state university, it could be morally certain that when those departments had got fully in contact with the people of the state, the stimulus to the intellectual and social life of the community would repay that endowment, over and over again, in more freight to haul, more passengers to carry, more goods to sell. If we desire to have industrial efficiency, social advancement, widely diffused wealth and prosperity, and pervading happiness and peace growing and strengthening constantly among us, the doors of our schools,

from the kindergarten to the university, must continue to be held wide open and the feast generously spread for all who will come.

One passes naturally, in any discussion of higher education, to a consideration of the higher aspects of politics; for the great aim of education, so far as the state is concerned, is the improvement of citizenship. How earnestly we need in the United States to-day a higher standard of citizenship, a keener sense of civic responsibility, a more scrupulous regard for common honesty and intelligence in everyday politics, is only too well known. It is the crying need of our time. Party issues come and go; they have their day and cease to be; times change, and we change with them. The controversies of the fathers are rarely the controversies of the sons, for we move ever onward into a new age. But the need of wisdom and knowledge and judgment, of trained powers of mind and disciplined strength of will, becomes only the greater as the problems of social life increase in complexity and range.

I am profoundly glad that in so many of our states of the Union, the people are not only attacking this problem at its foundation, by building up a complete and well-rounded system of public education, but that they are also doing this for themselves and through their own resources. I am one of those who believe that the surest road to good citizenship is through public state education, joined with the largest control of each state over its own affairs consistent with the safety and efficiency of the Republic. With loyalty, as sincere as it is profound, to my native land, with pride in its achievements and faith in its future, and with respect for all who, in sincerity and devotion, administer its affairs, I nevertheless deprecate the encroachment of the Federal Government upon what I believe to be the constitutional rights of the states and of the people. I cannot but think that such startling enlargement of the sphere of federal powers as is being witnessed in our day, however apparently beneficent its immediate results, must not only work a serious impairment of some of our most precious constitutional guarantees, but also, by lessening the feeling of state responsibility for the welfare of its people, lower the quality

and tone of our citizenship. Yet we may as well look the situation squarely in the face, and admit, as we must admit, that the expansion of federal authority will go on unless the states show themselves willing, as well as able, to deal effectively with all questions constitutionally within their domain, and vigorously withstand every unwarranted invasion of their rights.

The American university is no dead or fossilized structure, but a living organism with vigorous circulation, hard and well-trained muscles, sensitive nerves, healthy digestion, and unlimited capacity, if you feed it well, for work and public service. However tenacious it may be of what seems good in the past, its aim is to do the work of the present and the future. It never attains a perfect method of teaching, because methods are always changing; but it knows the sincerity of its purpose and the indispensableness of its service. The great demand of our time, in public as in private life, is for an education at once sound, thorough, fearless, in touch with reality, a preparation for life as life really is. Not merely, let me remark, for an education which is "practical" in the sense of giving more direct preparation for breadwinning, though that is a legitimate part of it; but practical in the sense of economical of time and effort, sound in method and content, balanced and sane in its proportions, inspiring and liberalizing in its tone. The community does not live solely that it may make a university better; but a university lives that it may make the community better.

To the pursuit, not of a distant or impossible ideal, but of an ideal attainable in very truth here and now, let us, then, devote ourselves. To receive freely all the sons and daughters of the State, however variously endowed, who can profit by its teaching; to give to all who come sound knowledge and vigorous discipline, whatever their ultimate aim in life; to inculcate the virtues of manliness and womanliness, the spirit of civic righteousness and public service, and belief in the supreme importance of ideals; to make its students love their home, their State, their country, to serve and cherish them faithfully all their days, and, if need be, to die for them; and then to send

its sons and daughters forth, armed and equipped, to labor and achieve in the field of the world: such is the mission of the state university. It is a large task and a hard, but only through the doing of it can the reign of law, the dominion of trained minds, and the beneficent sway of high impulses and exacting tastes be established and maintained. To the realization of this ideal let us pledge, as our fathers pledged in the great struggle for independence, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

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